



**An Archaeological Survey of the
27 Acre Rahaei Tract, Northeast San Antonio,
Texas**

by

Harry J. Shafer and Thomas R. Hester

SUBMITTED TO

**Frost GeoSciences
Helotes, Texas**

by

**ABASOLO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS
San Antonio, Texas**

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Abstract

In early October 2012, an archaeological survey was carried out on the 27-acre Rahaei Tract on Boerne Stage Road. This locale is in northern Bexar County and is drained by a tributary of Pecan Creek. All of the property was examined during the survey, and no archaeological evidence, either prehistoric or historic, was found. No further archaeological studies are needed.

Introduction

Abasolo Archaeological Consultants (AAC)¹ conducted a Phase I archaeological survey of the 27 acre Rahaei Tract at 27097 Boerne Stage Road in north Bexar County, Texas on October 8, 2012. Field work was conducted by the authors accompanied by T. G. Bey of Frost GeoSciences. The survey and assessment work was carried out to insure that no archaeological or historical resources eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are damaged or destroyed due to the planned development. This Phase I investigation is designed to detect and record any archaeological or historical component that may be present in the project area.

The Rahaei Tract borders Boerne Stage road on the north, Maverick Natural Area (National Register of Historic Places District, 1978) on the east and south (Figs. 1 and 2). A tributary of Pecan Creek borders the tract on the south as well, and is fed by a wet-weather spring. Because the property borders a small upland creek it was considered a high probability area for archaeological sites. As described below, however, the soils are shallow overall and there is much exposed limestone across the property.

The property is in the upland oak-juniper parkland characteristic of the Balcones Canyonlands at the margins of the Edwards Plateau (Fig. 3). The property was part of a small horse farm and also was used for deer hunting as indicated by sophisticated deer blind constructed of cinder blocks situated near an upright feeder. In addition to the deer stand there were zones cleared of vegetation throughout the property that afforded clear sighting for hunters.

¹ Abasolo Archaeological Consultants is SCTRCA certified (#211100341).

Overview of the Survey Area

Geology

The entirety of the Rahaei tract is, geologically, within the Glen Rose formation of the Trinity Group, dating to early Cretaceous times (Fig. 4). Based on Arnow's (1959: Plate 2) mapping, this is the upper member of the Glen Rose, a chalky limestone designated as Kgru. On the accompanying Figure 4 it is shown as Kgrl, the lower member of the Glen Rose. The distinction between the two parts of the Glen Rose is not important in the present context. Holocene alluvium (Qal) has been mapped along the small, spring-fed creek on the west edge of the tract.

Soils

Bexar County soils have been mapped in detail by Taylor et al. (1962). Those soils mapped on the Rahaei tract are indicated in Figure 5 and are common types in northern Bexar County. Much of the property has Tarrant-Brackett soils (TaB in Fig. 5) on 1-5% slopes. This is a dark, rocky soil over limestone, of which there are a number of exposures. It supports an environment best suited as range land. The latter can also be said for the Crawford-Bexar Stony Soils (Cb) along the eastern part of the tract. Crawford soils are stony clay over limestone, and Bexar soils consist of clay/cherty loam. The soils occupy 0-5% slopes. On the west edge of the tract, paralleling the small stream, and at the foot of the TaB slopes, is a narrow band of soils of the Krum Complex (Kr) on 2-5% slopes. These soils are typically found in narrow valleys of northern Bexar County, and are subjected to flooding and erosion.

Archaeological Background

Regional Culture History

The broad outline of the archaeology of northern Bexar County is reviewed here. Major time periods and site types are briefly noted.

The **Paleoindian** period, 9,200-6,800 B.C., has distinctive chipped stone spear points used in hunting mammoth and other late Ice Age mammals early in the period. Other spear types appear with a shift to bison, deer and other game after the Ice Age ended around 8000 B.C. (Hester 1986). Known site types in northern Bexar County are *campsites* with flint-chipping debris from stone-tool making and repair. One site of Clovis age (9,200 B.C.) was excavated near FM1604 and Leon Creek (Collins et al. 2003).

Sites of the following **Archaic** period are common in northern Bexar County. These peoples were hunters and gatherers as in the earlier Paleoindian period, but lived in an environment very similar to those of modern times. Projectile points used to tip spears (often erroneously called “arrowheads”) change in shape through time, from 6,800 B.C. to 500 A.D. (Turner et al. 2011). Archaeologists use these forms to recognize more specific time frames within the Archaic (e.g., Early, Middle and Late Archaic). In northern Bexar County, the most distinctive Archaic site is the *burned rock midden*. These large accumulations of fire-cracked limestone result from the use of earth-oven cooking starting around 3,000 B.C. (Black et al. 1997 ; Nickels et al. 2000) Such features were part of *larger campsites*, with large amounts of flint debris from tool-making; sometimes, animal bone (dietary remains) and charcoal that can be used for radiocarbon dating. Other Archaic site types include *lithic procurement* areas (where flint cobbles eroded out of the Edwards limestone and were processed; sometimes called “quarries”), *lithic scatters* (lightly-used areas probably representing short-term hunting and gathering activities), and rarely, *sinkhole burials* (Archaic peoples often disposed of their dead by placing them in sinkholes and caverns; Bement 1994).

By 700 A.D., there began to be some changes in the long hunter-gatherer life way. The **Late Prehistoric** is first seen with the introduction of the bow and arrow around A.D. 700. The stone arrow points are very small (mistakenly called “bird points”), but could be used in hunting game of any size. By 1300 A.D., the economy emphasized buffalo-hunting. Most sites of this era include *campsites*, often in areas previously used by

Archaic peoples, *lithic scatters* of this age; and the *lithic procurement areas* of earlier times continued to be used.

During the **Historic** period, the best known archaeological remains are *ranch and farm houses of cut stone*, dating from the 1840s through the 1880s. Stacked- stone fences also occur. Such sites, including those without surviving structures, are recognized from 19th century pottery fragments, artifacts of glass and metal, etc. Later Historic houses and farmsteads, through the early 1900s, are also found.

Nearby Sites

Very few prehistoric and historic sites have been recorded in this part of northern Bexar County (Texas Archeological Site Atlas, Texas Historical Commission). Of greatest importance in evaluating the Rahaei tract is the presence of large National Register of Historic Places District to the west. The district, designated in 1978, represents the Maverick-Altgelt Ranch and Fenstermaker-Fromme Farm. It is widely known for its significance, and the current occupant, Bebe Fenstermaker, has been extensively honored for her preservation of this property. She has been successful in stopping road construction (Highway 211), dams, and other development that would impact the District.

Six recorded sites are in the District, labeled as 41BX493 to 41BX498. Some sites are prehistoric, typically burned rock middens that have been vandalized by relic-hunters, while most are Historic structures reflecting the history of the District. These include stone school buildings, log structures, barns, root cellars, wells, low stone walls, and a cemetery.

Research Design

To fully inspect the area, a 100% pedestrian survey was conducted over the entire 27 acre tract. The property includes limestone uplands and a low terrace of an upland creek. In addition to the pedestrian survey, backhoe testing was initially recommended due to the

potential soil depth along the creek floodplain. Upon inspection however, the need for backhoe testing was not deemed essential due to the shallow soils. A no artifact collection policy was followed. Any archeological material encountered was to be located on the project map. Following the fieldwork, the information recovered from the pedestrian survey was compiled and evaluated. A formal report was prepared for Frost GeoSciences and the City of San Antonio. This report fulfills that task.

Survey Findings

The Rahaei Tract consists of an oak-juniper parkland with timber stands interspersed with patches of open areas, prickly pear and grass (Fig. 6). Ground visibility was generally good. There is ample evidence of relatively recent clearing of juniper to facilitate deer hunting and grazing.

The property is currently occupied by a masonry ranch-style home that dates to the mid 20th century (Fig. 7 top). Several temporary outbuildings are also on the property but none of the structures have or merit historic designation. In addition, a deer stand constructed of cinder blocks, a deer feeder placed about 100 meters from the deer stand, a portable building currently used for storage, a cache of cinder blocks, and an odd stack of cinder blocks creating a small pylon were recent features noted on the property.

The pedestrian survey found no evidence of prehistoric cultural resources despite the presence of an upland creek with a wet-weather spring nearby (Fig. 7 bottom). The slopes north of the creek and two limestone terraces offer a promising landscape for prehistoric sites, but no traces of cultural resources were observed despite a thorough coverage of the property. Outcrops of Glen Rose limestone occur throughout the property above the floodplain; Lower Cretaceous Glen Rose formation does not have chert associated in contrast to the overlying Edwards formation. The only chert that would occur in the Glen Rose zone would be stone tools discarded by prehistoric Indian groups. Surprisingly, no isolated or scattered stone artifacts were seen on the entire Rahaei tract despite the generally good surface visibility across the property. The identification of scattered fire-

cracked limestone, another indicator of prehistoric cultural activity, was marred by the clear indication that several extensive burned patches, possibility associated with intentional brush clearing or brush fire scorched several areas within the survey tract and creating oxidized burned rocks. The survey crew did note, however, that these clusters of burned rocks were associated with charcoal and partly burned juniper indicating the burning had occurred relatively recently.

Summary and Recommendations

A pedestrian cultural resource survey was conducted on the 27 acre Rahaei Tract on Boerne Stage Road in north Bexar County. No cultural resources were observed or recorded during the archaeological survey. Therefore, no further archaeological work is recommended.

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Figures

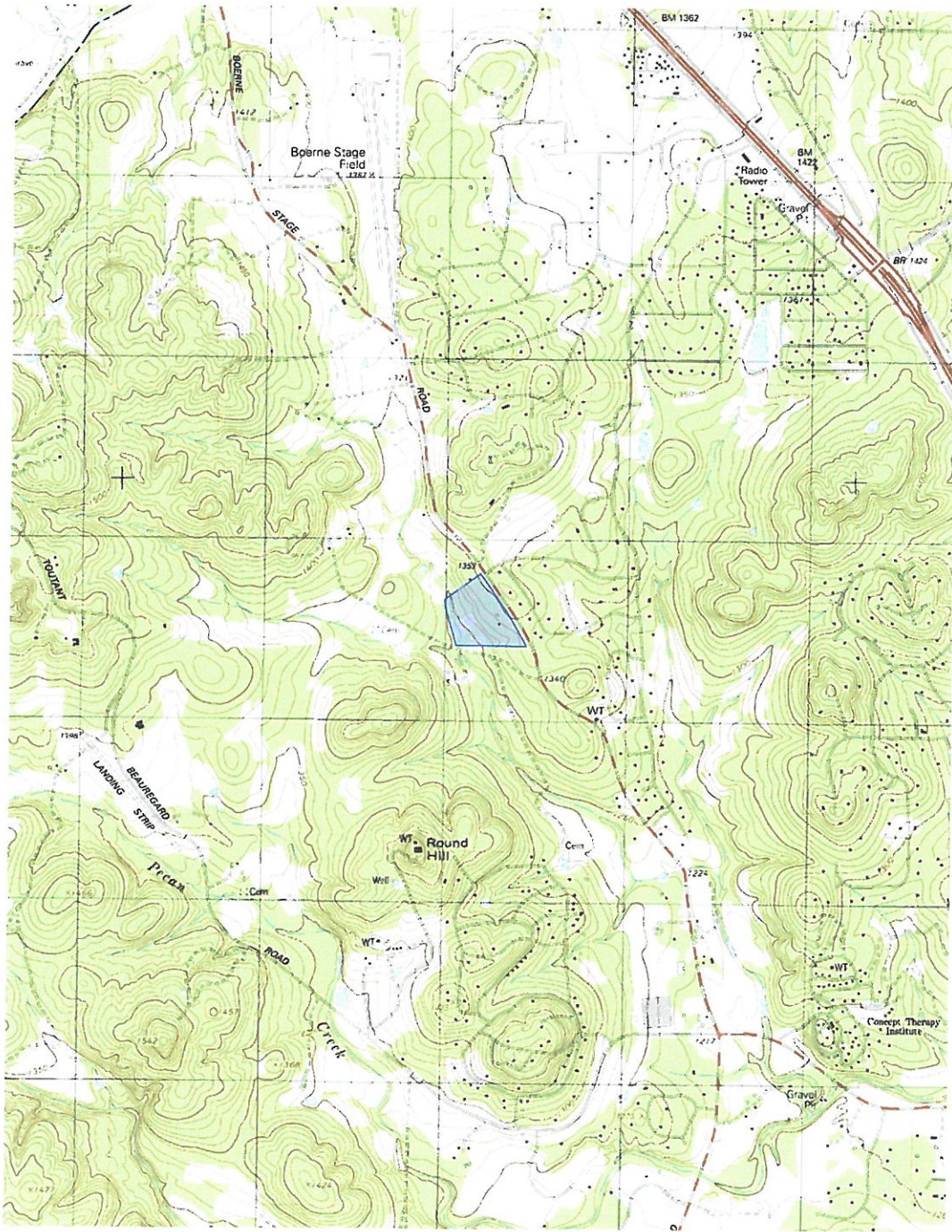


Figure 1. Topographic map of the area in north Bexar County showing the location of the Rahaei Tract (image provided by Frost GeoSciences).



Figure 2. Aerial map of the area in north Bexar County along Boerne State Road showing the location of the Rahaei Tract (image provided by Frost GeoSciences).



Figure 3. Views of the oak-juniper parkland and cleared areas on the Rahaei Tract in north Bexar County.

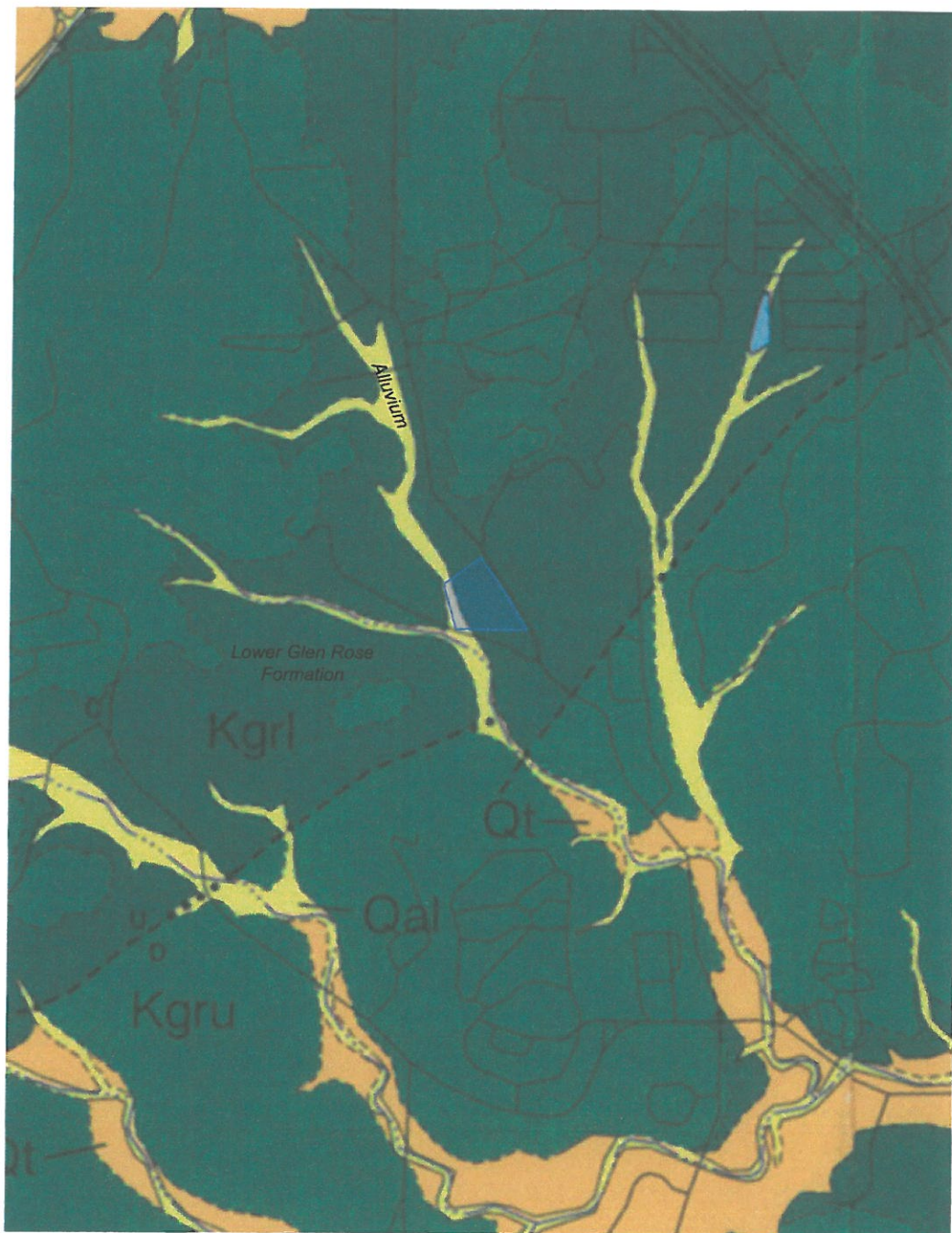


Figure 4. Geological maps of north Bexar County showing the location of the Rahaei Tract (image provided by Frost GeoSciences).

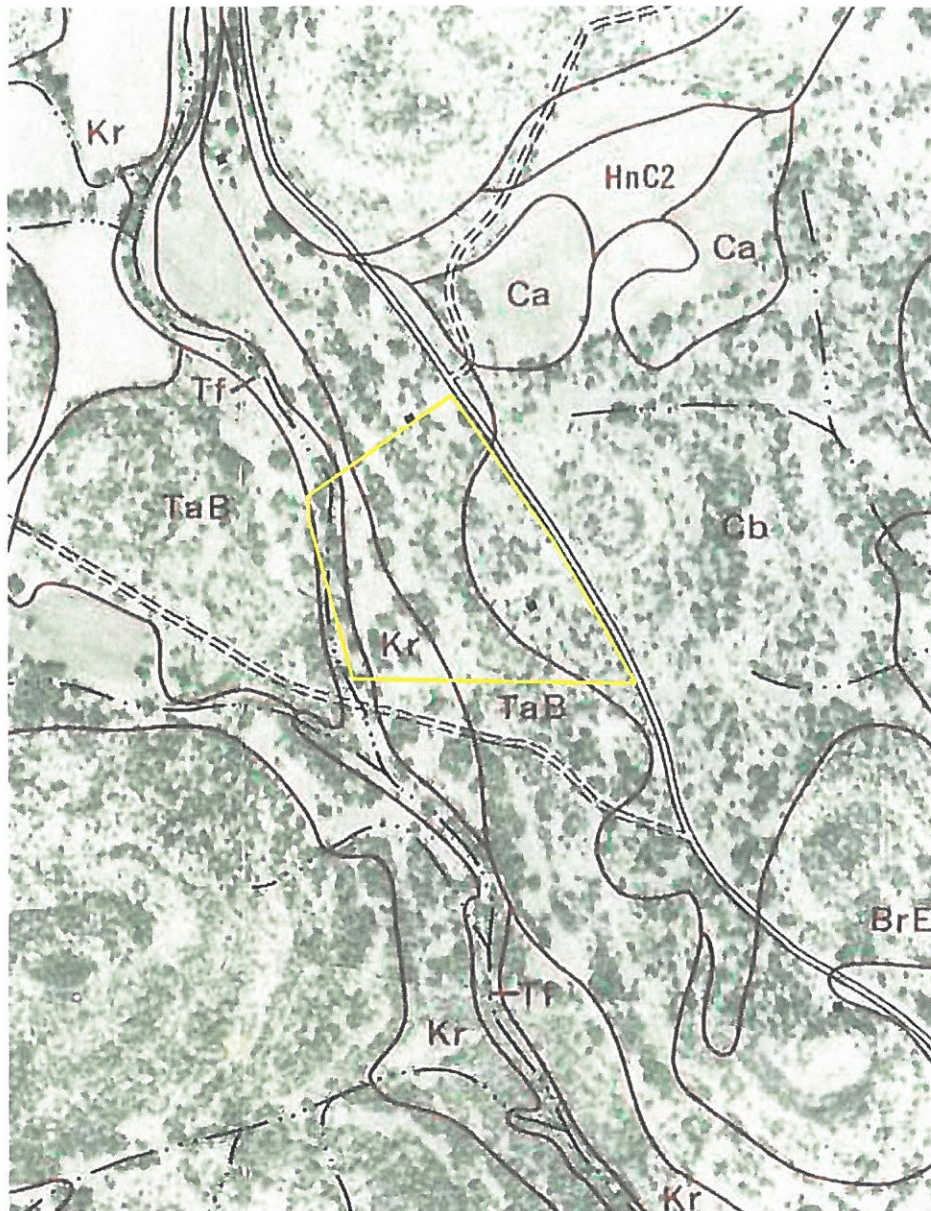


Figure 5. General soils map showing the location of the Rahaei Tract relative to the local soils (image provided by Frost GeoSciences).



Figure 6. Views of the Rahaei tract showing the oak parkland and rocky surface supporting prickly pear cactus.



Figure 7. Top: Twentieth century ranch-style home that is currently on the property. Bottom: spring flow in a tributary of Pecan Creek that borders the tract on the west.